

Anthony Horn Interview

Kline: My name is Philip Kline, and my partner is Joseph Naughton and we are interviewing Anthony Martin Horn at Joseph's House in Myerstown, Pennsylvania. Tony was born on September 5, 1925 in Newark, Ohio. He served in the U.S. Navy during World War II in the Pacific. His highest rank achieved was Seaman third class. This interview is being conducted for the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress. Okay Tony, could you tell us a little bit about your family?

Mr. Horn: My family? Well, I was married 59 years, would have been married in three more weeks we would have been married 60 years before my wife passed away. We had four boys, and one of the boys was in the service. My oldest son was in the, he was in the Navy during the Vietnam War. And, I went to twelve years of school before, before I joined the service. In fact, I was still a senior when I joined the service in 1943. I joined the service in March and graduation was in June. But, I think there was about half the boys in the class went into service around that same time. And they gave us, they gave us our diplomas and everything, so it turned out okay.

Kline: Why did you enlist in the Navy?

Mr. Horn: Well, I enlisted because of the war, and seemed like that was the thing to do in those days. Everybody was enlisting or either drafted or enlisted, so I enlisted. I was only 17 years old, and when I joined the Navy, I wanted to get into the submarine corps, but they didn't need anybody in there at the time so they put me where they needed me. And I went to school for six months to learn how to be a fire control man, which is controlling the guns on the ship, had nothing to do with fire.

Kline: Had nothing to do with fire. Where did you go for your training?

Mr. Horn: Sampson, New York. It was a very short course, because like I say, they were in a hurry to get men at the time. So, they shoved us right through, no big deal. So, instead of being like a two-year course, we got shoved through in less than a year.

Kline: What was your training like?

Mr. Horn: My training, it was very simple. I didn't really have to, I didn't really do much for some reason or another. I seemed to get out of all the KP's and stuff like that. All I did was loaf around most of the time. That's the same thing I did in, on the ship. I never, I never really got involved in, in uh actual duties of a sailor because of my position. And then I, I eventually took over the Tailor Shop because the tailor that we had on board got sick and was sent home. So, my officer made, enlisted me to become the tailor, which turned out great because, turned out I had my own private room and everything so, and uh I did the guy's tailoring. That way I got all my laundry done for nothing, and I got my hair cuts and shaves, and massages and all that kind of stuff. So, it really turned out great. I had a racket.

Kline: Did you have any specialized training during your service?

Mr. Horn: Well, just that there, learned how to be a fire control men which was the actual control of the ships guns, automatic controls that I had to take care of and set and so forth. And, I also operated the range finder on the side.

Kline: How did you adapt to the military life, the food?

Mr. Horn: Oh I adapted great, like I say for some reason or another I just everything just turned out great for me I was lucky. I never had to go through any of the difficult training periods or anything like that, so I had a racket.

Kline: Where did you serve in the war?

Mr. Horn: I served aboard two ships. The maiden ship I served on was a tanker. It was a fleet tanker which traveled with the fleet and refueled the ships, before they went into battle and refueled them as they came out. We refueled them again, so they could go back in again. And I also served a little bit of time on a minesweeper. A gentleman that they had on the minesweeper at the time was doing the job I was doing on the tanker got sick so they sent me over there to train somebody, which was only about four months. Took me about four months till I had somebody trained to take over that job. Then I went back to the tanker, so I spent the majority of my time on the tanker.

Kline: What was it like to be on a ship for months on end?

Mr. Horn: It was good, except for the ship I was on, we never got into ports. Instead of going to port to fill our tanks, we just met some ship out at sea and got the oil and gas from them. So we were out, at one stretch we were out 18 months without ever getting off of the ship. But, they fed us good. They brought food in from the big aircraft carriers. They brought us food and fresh vegetables and all that kind of stuff so it wasn't bad.

Kline: How were you treated on the ships?

Mr. Horn: Oh, wonderful like I say I had a racket. I did all of the tailoring for the officers, so they treated me great. And their mess boys, I did their tailoring so they brought me the same food the officers were eating. I was eating so hey couldn't get any better than that.

Kline: Did you arrive after the battles or were you there before the battles?

Mr. Horn: No, before because we had to be there to make sure the ships were all refueled before they went in. And then when they went in and did the shelling, then they came out and we refueled them again so they could go back in again. We laid back oh I'd say probably 50 miles or so it was you know no big deal I had a good time. I enjoyed every minute of it.

Naughton: What did you see in the Pacific Islands like the terrain and the weather?

Mr. Horn: Oh, the Pacific Islands were beautiful, what I saw of them. I only got off at two islands. I got off in Hawaii for a while, which was a beautiful place. I also got off at the Marshall Islands after the battle was over. They had the most beautiful water there, clear as a whistle, seemed like you could see forever down the water. Nothing but coral, beautiful coral and fish, beautiful fish. Those were the only two islands that I really got off on, although I did go to other islands to pick up our mail. I was assigned the mail boy so I used the captain's gig to go to other islands to pick up our mail but I never got a chance to go around the islands.

Naughton: What was it like in Leyte, in the Philippines?

Mr. Horn: Well, it was like I say, I never really got involved in any of the battles. We could hear and see the guns going off but we were laid back and well guarded. We had four destroyers guarding us. One on each side, and one on the stern and one forward. So, we had four destroyers around us to protect us.

Naughton: How many ships were in your convoy, like there would be three destroyers guarding you how many ships were in your convoy?

Mr. Horn: Oh my, sometimes there was as high as twenty-five, anywhere from twenty to twenty five.

Naughton: Describe some of your Battle experiences in the war, you said you weren't in battle that often?

Mr. Horn: No, the only, I don't know if you would call it a battle or not; we were attacked by Kamikazes twice. But, because of the protection we had with the destroyers, only one ever got close to us. Then our sister ship that we travelled with. They were torpedoed by one of those small one man submarines I guess you'd call them. They were actually just manned torpedoes is what they really were. They were hit twice with one of those and they sank it within just seemed like minutes. Well it was more than minutes I'd say maybe an hour at the most. They lost most of their men because they had about three or four explosions on board. They had just loaded up with fuel, aviation fuel which we carried to supply the small carriers that went with the convoys. We couldn't see it but we could hear it. We saw the flames go up in the air and stuff like that. It was pretty bad. Then we had to hang around for a couple of weeks to pick up the dead bodies and so forth.

Naughton: That must have been sad. Was that a traumatizing experience seeing the dead bodies?

Mr. Horn: Well, it wasn't pretty. That's for sure because the bodies were all bloated and we used grappling hooks to get a hold of them, and it would like tear an arm off or something like that. So, it wasn't a pretty sight, but something had to be done.

Naughton: On a lighter note, describe some friendships during the war?

Mr. Horn: I made a lot of good friends although I never stayed in touch with any of them, except for a short period of time and gradually, we just more or less faded away. I had one particular friend that lived close to Philadelphia in Manyunk. He was a boxer, and we were very good friends. When we came back to the states, I went home with him for a couple days. Other than that why I had a pretty good friend from Tennessee. He was a big strapping outdoors guy so he was my protector. Nobody could ever get close to me do me any harm because he right there to protect me.

Naughton: I wish I had a big guy to defend me. You said you're not still in contact with any of your friends?

Mr. Horn: No, I no longer am.

Naughton: How did you stay in contact with your family during the war?

Mr. Horn: During the war?

Naughton: Yeah, how did you stay in contact with them? Did you send them letters?

Mr. Horn: Well, the only work friends I had were the ones aboard ship, you know, so it was easy to stay in contact with them. Weren't going anywhere.

Naughton: Did you send letters to your family, on the ship?

Mr. Horn: Yes. Yes, that's the only communication I had with the family, was through letters. Of which I, I'm not a very fond letter writer, so they got very few letters from me; I got a lot from them, but they got very few from me.

Naughton: How did you feel when the war was finally over?

Mr. Horn: Oh, great. In fact, well, when the war actually ended, we were on our way back to the States already. Because, they were no longer shelling any islands or anything like that, so the last one we were in was when they were shelling the Philippines, Before MacArthur went back to the Philippines. So then, they sent all of us back to the States.

Naughton: So, your ship was sent home because they didn't really need it any more.

Mr. Horn: Right. They kept a couple of them there, but we were one that was sent home.

Naughton: What was the reaction of all of your friends on the ship when the war was over? Was it all a big celebration?

Mr. Horn: We landed in San Francisco. That's where we landed, and it was like a one - drunk period of a week. We all got loaded and caroused around, picking up girls and so forth. So, it was like I said, typical sailor's life.

Naughton: When the war was over, when you went home, what career did you go into?

Mr. Horn: Well, I went to work right away. I didn't even collect one unemployment check. I went to work as soon as I got back, and I went back to the job I had, which was in a large grocery store called Food Fair, which no longer exists. But, I went back there and I was there for just a couple years when they sent me to Harrisburg to manage as a grocery manager in on of the grocery stores they were opening up there, and I stayed there for about five years or so, and then my wife was very reluctant to move, so I started trying to make contact with something at home where I could get a job and luckily, there was a McCormick salesman that used to come to the store and he lived in Lebanon, and he was going into business with another fellow, into the printing business, so he asked me if I wanted to learn the printing business, and I said "Yeah." So I quit the job up there, and I took a pretty good cut in pay, but that's the way it went, and that's how I got into the printing business. But, I only worked there a couple years and then I went to a larger

printing plant in Lebanon, a paper box plant, and I worked there a couple years, and then this outfit that I ended up with, they were building a new building, and they were advertising for pressman, so I went there and applied for a job and got it right away, so I was there for 37 years.

Naughton: You retired, so when did you decide to retire?

Mr. Horn: 'Ninety-one. 1991, I retired. Sixty-five years old. Now I'm 85.

Naughton: How were you treated by civilians when you got back home?

Mr. Horn: Oh, wonderful. Everybody was glad to see me. It was so much different than the guys coming back from Vietnam. My son was in Vietnam, and they weren't treated well at all, not the way we were treated. They had all kinds of parades and stuff for us.

Naughton: Treated like heroes.

Mr. Horn: But, the fellows coming back from Vietnam. They were not treated well at all.

Naughton: I'm interested to hear about what do you think about the war in the Middle East. What do you think the United States should do about it?

Mr. Horn: Well, I think it's a waste of time. I think that if they wanted to, they could go in there and end that thing anytime they wanted to, but they're reluctant to do that, so, personally, I don't agree with what they're doing, but I'm not in a position to do anything about it, so I take it the way it is. I really do think it's a waste of time, because things will never change over there anyway. They've been fighting over there since, a little over than '01 [2001], and I don't think it'll ever change. Personally, I hope I'm wrong, but that's the way I look at it.

Naughton: Yeah, I agree with you about the Middle East. We should get out of there. How did your service affect the rest of your life?

Mr. Horn: Good. But I don't think it affected it at all, as far as that goes. It took away four of my youthful years, but other than that, I can't see where it had that much affect. Only the Lord knows what I would've done if I wouldn't have gone into the service because I don't think I would've gone to college. I couldn't afford college, so, personally, I think it was a good thing for me.

Naughton: When you were in the war, and you came back, did you learn any life lessons about courage or anything like that?

Mr. Horn: No, I don't think so. I took things as they came. I never got involved in politics or anything like that, so I just took things the way they came. I worked two jobs most of my entire life, so, I didn't have much time to do anything else.

Naughton: When you got back home, today, how many kids did you have with your wife?

Mr. Horn: How many children did we have? Four. Four boys. Never had a girl, which we always wanted, but now I have four granddaughters and one grandson, so, they took the place of our girl. All of them are beautiful girls. One of them graduated from college two years ago, and the youngest one is in her second year of college, and the middle-aged one, she didn't care to go to college after graduation, so she worked two jobs, and the other one went to technical school, where you had to operate and maintain medical equipment, and she's doing wonderful. She's getting top grades, and in fact, the teacher sent a letter home to her dad, telling him what a wonderful student she was, and if all her students were like her, their jobs would be a pleasure, and stuff like that, it was great.

Naughton: How did you find out about the Veteran's History Project? How did you get involved with the project?

Mr. Horn: The Veteran's Project? My friend called me up and asked me about this Washington trip. He's involved with everything, so he called me up and asked if I would be interested in going, and I said, 'Well, certainly.' Because, I don't go hardly anywhere anymore, so that was a great experience. I really enjoyed that trip. Of course I had a good guy with me.

Naughton: I think in April, we're going again, and I'm pretty sure you'll be invited along if there's enough seats on the bus.

Mr. Horn: Yeah, I'd be glad to if I'm able. With me, it's a day to day thing with me. Although lately, I've been feeling good, except for the pain in my knees and my shoulder, but that wouldn't stop me from going, as long as they have a wheelchair for me.

Naughton: What were your best memories from the field trip that we went on?

Mr. Horn: The whole was absolutely wonderful. Everything went real smooth. The meal we got was outstanding, so I enjoyed that, and our stop over at the memorial was really nice, because I was there one time many years ago, and it wasn't as nearly completed as it was now. So, that was a nice part of it too. But, all of the fellows were easy to get along with, easy to talk to, and I can't thank you young guys for helping us out, because us older guys need a little help occasionally. Especially when it comes to walking a distance, but it was nice, really nice. I'd go again in a minute. Unfortunately, I never know from one day to the next whether I'm able to do it, because I get certain setbacks on occasion, and I never know when they're going to happen. But, I've been pretty good lately, and in the last couple months I've been wonderful, so I hope that continues.

Naughton: What was the name of your friend, who got you to come along?

Mr. Horn: Ed. Edward Emerich, There's a guy. He could talk the ear off of anybody. I don't know. He always has something to talk about, of which, I am not a conversationalist at all, unless someone asks me questions like you were asking me. I don't get a chance to say too much, but that guy, he just talks and talks and talks. He never stops talking. Of course you know that. You heard him.

Naughton: Yeah, I heard him.

Mr. Horn: But, he's a nice guy. He used to work for Tasty-Cake. He had a good position with Tasty-Cake, started out on a truck, but then he got some of executive job, so he did all right. I think his son still works for Tasty-Cake. I heard that they're not doing as well as they used to. That's the way it goes with any business, I suppose.

Naughton: Yeah, especially in these hard times, with the economy.

Mr. Horn: Yeah. What else do you want to know?

Naughton: I have a couple more questions for you. Do you think it's a good idea that the Veteran's History Project is going on? I think it's a very good idea, that preserves all the information about veterans.

Mr. Horn: Oh, yeah, sure. Anything for the government.

Naughton: At school, we did a lot of research about World War II.

Mr. Horn: Yeah, that was the greatest war. World War II made the country. It seemed like everybody was involved in World War II, whereas these other wars, like Korea and Vietnam. They really aren't wars; they're just conflicts.

Naughton: Yeah, World War II changed the nation in many ways.

Mr. Horn: Absolutely. It just seemed like everyone got together; men, women, and younger people all got together, and were involved in that war, one way or another.

Naughton: And we would've never won the war without brave men like you, serving your nation.

Mr. Horn: Well, I wouldn't go that far to say that. But, the women probably could've done just as well.

Naughton: Well, Tony, my partner and I, we want to thank you.

Mr. Horn: Well, I appreciate it.

Kline: Thank you Tony.

Mr. Horn: Okay, Philip.